

THE GIANT

Other Nonsense Verse
by ALBERT W. SMITH



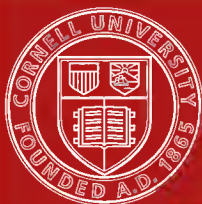
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The Giant

AND

Other Nonsense Verse

BY

ALBERT W. SMITH

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"The Giant," the "Arctic Ball," and "Funnyland," in slightly different form, appeared originally in "The Ladies' Home Journal," and thanks are due to the editor for his kind permission to include them in this book.

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To
Ruby
Alpheus
Dorothy
and
Ruth.

THE GIANT

THERE is a Giant in the world
Whose head is up so high,
He has to get down on his knees
To look up in the sky.

And when he feels the need of food,
He wades out in the sea
And fishes out a whale or two
Just right to fricassee.

Or if he's near to Hindustan
He gathers up a few
Young elephants with jungle brush
For oriental stew.

And when he tires of earthly food
His diet, as a rule,
Consists of planets roasted well
And hung outside to cool.

He sends his wife to gather them ;
She brings them on a tray ;
For cream to make the planet sauce
She skims the Milky Way.

When Mrs. Giant cooks, the steam
Floats off across the sky
In clouds that drop the rain that keeps
The world from getting dry.

And sometimes when the clouds are dark,
The Giant gets his gun
And shoots it in their very midst—
Because he likes the fun.

But when the sky is clear all day,
Without a cloud in sight,
The Giant finds his supper cold
When he gets home at night.

Whenever Mrs. Giant goes
To tidy up the room,
She picks a comet 'cause its tail
Is handy for a broom.

The Giant drinks, to quench his thirst,
A whirling water-spout ;
He gave up drinking mountain lakes
Lest he should have the gout.

He puts a forest in his pipe
When he's inclined to smoke,
And lights his match upon the moon ;
The moon can't see the joke !

I think, my child, were you a moon,
'Way off in stellar space,
You'd feel put out if anyone
Scratched matches on your face !

The Giant dresses up sometimes
And goes to take a stroll ;
And picks a little bunch of stars
To deck his buttonhole.

He's mighty careful which he takes ;
He knows the ones to shun ;
He burned his fingers badly once
By fooling with the Sun.

And once in absent minded mood
He picked a nettle star ;—
He ran a-yelling all the way
From Rome to Zanzibar !

The islands are his stepping-stones,
The continents his bed ;
He slept on Greenland once and caught
A snuffle in his head.

He slides around the Arctic Pole ;
And if he gets a chill
He goes and sits a month or two
In India or Brazil.

He caught his trousers on Cape Horn
And tore an awful slit ;
He stayed in bed a season while
His wife embroidered it ;
She fixed it with a patch of sky ;
It didn't show a bit !

THE GIANT

When walking through a mountain land,
He sometimes stubs his toe ;
The shock is called an earthquake by
The frightened folks below.

Our weather only comes about
Up to the Giant's knees ;
The rest of him sticks up above
As pleasant as you please.

So, when he wants to dust his shoes,
He only has to stand
A minute in the middle of
Some handy, windy land.

He saw the men who went to dig
The Panama Canal.
He slapped his knees and laughed until
He grew hysterical.

He could have finished that Canal
With half a dozen kicks ;
But he had promised not to get
Mixed up in politics !

One night a great astronomer,
While gazing into space,
By chance looked through his telescope
Right in the Giant's face.

He thought it was the moon until
The Giant winked his eye ;—
The wise man never dared again
To search the starry sky.

We never see the Giant, for
On seeing us he flies,
Because he feels so ill at ease
And conscious of his size.

THE ARCTIC BALL

THEY gave a ball in the Arctic Zone,
And they danced on the frozen sea.
The North-wind blew on a big trombone,
And he played tunes that would melt a stone,
But none in a minor key ;
For that would melt ice and lower the tone.
Imagine a ball in the Arctic Zone
On a melting, mushy sea !

An Arctic ball is a long, long thing,
For it's dark for six months there.
They dance from Fall till early Spring,
The two-step, waltz and the Highland-fling,
Utterly free from care.
They eat ice-cream that they have to blow
To cool it off for it burns them so ;
And they all drink liquified air.

The whalloping whales came floundering through
A hole in the icy floor ;
And the Seals all came and the Caribou,
The old Musk-ox, and the Reindeer too
And many many more.
They all joined feet and flippers and fins
And danced 'round the Pole where the world begins,
With bark and bellow and roar.

When Boreas started an Irish reel
The Reindeer pricked up his ears ;
And a thrill ran through him from antler to heel
Of longing to dance that he couldn't conceal,
Although the most proper of deers.
So they scattered some sand in an open space
And gave him a hearty call ;
And he sidestepped out with a rythmical pace,
And danced to the reel with the greatest of grace.
'Twas the finest thing at the ball !

An Iceberg waltzed with the Northern Light ;
And she flushed and smiled and said :
“O, why, dear Berg, so cool tonight ?
You give me a chill and a frosty fright,
Lest I catch a cold in my head.”
“I'm as warm as I dare to be, my sweet,
With dancing and love of you ;
If I loved you more or should hurry my feet,
My blood would rise to a fever heat,
Fahrenheit thirty-two.
And then I'd melt and babble away,
From a tall iceberg to a big flat bay ;
Melted for love of you.”

The Walrus danced with the Polar Bear,
But it wasn't much for grace ;
Their joints were rusty and out of repair :
But the Bear wore an icicle wreath in her hair,
And the Walrus a smiling face.
And the Chaperone said, behind her fan :
" They're doing the best they possibly can,
And laughter is out of place ! "

The North Pole listened and wondered why
He felt such a troublesome thrill ;
Though he stood stock still as they all danced by,
It was sorely against his will.
But if he should move just the wink of an eye,
The world would wobble and things would fly
And the oceans would surely spill.
So he heaved a sigh and took a brace
And held himself in his proper place,
And " the old world wags on still. "

A TROPICAL AFTERNOON TEA

ONE afternoon when a mild monsoon
Blew over the tropical sea,
On the ocean strand of a sandy land
They gave a Tropical Tea.

O, O, who could foresee
All the beasts there would be at a Tropical Tea?
In a monsoony land,
With a Tropical Band.
O, who could foresee?

Every lady beast attended the feast
With the lady birds so fair;
But the Whale and the Eel were sure they would feel
Quite out of their element there.

O, O, think of an Eel!
With a squirming disgust that she couldn't conceal!
Nothing wet but the tea,
Far away from the sea.
O, think of the Eel!

A truce for the day kept the beasts of prey
From eating a handy guest;
So the Tiger was there and the timid Hare,—
Though the Hare wasn't quite at her best.

O, O, if the Hare wasn't scared !
She would have gone lippetty home if she'd dared.
But she gave up the flight
And kept well out of sight.
O, wasn't she scared !

The Zebra sneered when the Leopard appeared,
And said with a satisfied smile :
“In France they would not wear a dress with a spot
And stripes are the latest style.”

O, surely the Zebra forgot
That the Leopard's unable to alter a spot ;
Her critical tone
She'd have dropped if she'd known.
She surely forgot !

The Ostrich was dressed in her very best
With plummy wings outspread ;
But the Paradise Bird said : “ How absurd !
She hasn't a plume for her head ! ”

O, O, it wasn't polite !
The Ostrich felt sure that she looked like a fright.
She covered her head
In a handy sand-bed
Quite out of their sight.

The Chimpanzee sipped oolong tea
And simpered and nibbled a sweet ;
And the Boa-constrictor would fain have kicked her,
But she hadn't the requisite feet.

O, O, she wasn't complete !
A twenty foot Boa without any feet ;
If she'd had twenty three
What a kicker she'd be !
She wasn't complete !

An Orang-outang came out and sang
Unembarrassed by the throng ;
And they cried encore with a terrible roar
To her tropical, topical song.

SONG :

In the jungle dim and dusky,
A monkey lithe and husky
Was hanging by his long prehensile tail ;
When he heard two men, preparing
An iron cage, declaring
That they'd learn the monkey lingo without fail.

O, O, wasn't it fun !
He unhooked his tail and he started to run ;
Every simian friend
To the dim jungle's end
He told of the fun !

When at night the men were waiting
Safe behind the iron grating,
The monkeys came in crowds from every way,
And although it was exciting,
Yet the men inside were writing
All the things they thought they heard the
monkeys say.

O, O, this is a lark !
'Two men writing monkey talk down in the dark ;
If they only could know
What we're saying, O, O,
Then 'twould be a lark !

An Elephant rose with a cold in her nose
And she thought she would sing like a bird ;
But the song went astray on the wearisome way
Through her trunk, and it never was heard.

O, O, she felt like a goose ;
With a song in her soul that she couldn't turn loose ;
How she twisted and blew !
But it couldn't get through.
O, what was the use !

A Crocodile with an afternoon smile
Sang a song that made them quail.
Her mouth opened wide and the sight inside
Gave point to her musical tale.

SONG :

A yacht came sailing up the Nile,
Sail away, sail away,
And the sight made every crocodile smile ;
Smile away, smile away,
With a bubbly wake, through foam and spray,
Through Egypt's land, it sailed away.
Alack-a-day !

The Sphinx was smiling all the while,
Smile away, smile away,
As the yacht came sailing up the Nile ;
Sail away, sail away,
And she asked them a riddle that none could guess
So she swamped the yacht in a wink or less.
Alack-a-day !

Not a single person came to land ;
Alack-a-day ! Alack-a-day !
But crocodiles on every hand,
Smile away, smile away,
Said : " O, we wish that every day
A yacht would happen along this way !"
Alack-a-day !

And everyone stayed till the twilight shade
Dimmed the tropical afternoon.
And they all went away through the fading day,
By the moon through the mild Monsoon.

O, O, it was a lark !
They gossiped and stayed till the edge of the dark.
And some were afraid
And were sorry they'd stayed.
O, wasn't it dark !

THE TIDES

THE ocean had, in days of yore,
A very dirty, mussy shore
From Newfoundland to Singapore.

When mermaids wished to go to land,
To sit and sing upon the strand,
They had to flop through slimy sand.

When Neptune saw this, it befell,
He took his dolphin team and shell
And sped away across the swell.

He went to every sea and bay,
And gave his orders all the way
From Greenland's rim to far Cathay;—

And now the tides rise up and roar,
And twice a day they wash the shore
From Newfoundland to Singapore ;

And beaches lie all clean and fair,
Where mermaids sing and take the air
With tidy tails and streaming hair.

NIGHT AND DAY

BEFORE Time started on his way
There was no changing night and day;
The sun stood still above Bombay.

And Bombay people had to hear
The constant clanging far and near
Of bells that called to noonday cheer.

They ate continuously, for when
They finished their dessert, why then
They started off with soup again.

One eats with pleasure and a jest
With time between meals to digest ;
But constant eating spoils the zest.

* * * * *

About three thousand miles away
In all directions from Bombay
It was forever early day ;

And people worked with might and main
Hoping for dinner time and fain
For night and rest, but all in vain.

A sandwich snatched, a wedge of pie,
A cat-nap stolen on the sly,
These were the only reasons why,

Since they could neither rest or play,
 They didn't stop in sheer dismay
 And starve, dry up and blow away.

* * * * *

And further on for many a mile
 The dawn held sway with rosy smile,
 And yawning folks dressed all the while.

* * * * *

The rest of earth was brooded o'er
 By endless night, and one grand snore
 Swelled loud and long from shore to shore.

And folks would wake with start and sigh
 And rub their eyes and wonder why
 Dawn never tinged the eastern sky.*

The moon and stars were wan and pale
 From overwork, the nightingale
 Could only croak and hoarsely wail.

* Some critic now will surely say :—

“How could they think of dawn when they
 Had never been where it was day?”

Their shiftless forbears may have pined
 In dawn-land, and with debts behind
 Have gone where they were hard to find.

So, gentle critic, be content.
 This hope of dawn was surely sent
 By atavistic accident.

But ghosts might range abroad at will
Fearless of dawn and cock-crow shrill,
And waken folks with awful thrill.

* * * * *

Now Phoebus driving in his car
With winged steeds from star to star,
Passed by the earth and from afar

Beheld the weary human race ;
He checked his horses for a space
And pondered with a serious face ;

Then put his horses to the run
And when a long swift course was done
He hitched his wagon to the sun.

Since then the dusky night alway
Around the world has chased the day ;
And we can work and rest and play.

FUNNYLAND

THERE'S an island 'way off in the seas
Where the babies all grow upon trees.
It's the jolliest fun
To swing in the sun ;
But they have to look out how they sneeze,
O, I tell you they'd better not sneeze !
They might break themselves off
With a sneeze or a cough
And tumble down flop on their knees.

When the clouds darken mountain and dale,
When the breeze freshens up to a gale,
There is screaming and dropping
And laughing and hopping ;—
In fact little babies just hail.
They all lie on the ground in a pile,
And when people come, after a while,
They quickly pass by
The babies that cry,
And they pick up the babies that smile ;—
O, they even take twins if they smile !

There's a tree where the kitty-cats grow.
They hang by their tails in a row ;
If they happen to fall,
They don't mind it at all,
For they fall on their feet as you know.

There once was a puppy-dog tree
That people came miles just to see.
But the bark was so loud
That it scattered the crowd
And rattled the isles of the sea ;
It frightened the King,
And the troublesome thing
Was cut down by a royal decree.
Whenever dogs grow now at all,
They are puggy and snarly and small ;
They grow on a vine
Like a squash, and they whine
Although they can't possibly fall.

Wherever an elephant grows,
He's always hitched on by his nose ;
And he just has to wait
Till his weight is so great
That his nose is stretched out to a hose ;—
That accounts for his rubbery nose.
And sometimes, when something is wrong,
The elephant hitch is so strong
That he fails to get free
From the elephant tree
Till his nose is a hundred feet long.
So he buys a hose-cart
To trundle a part
Of his nose as he lumbers along.

Any sensible person should know
How giraffes are hitched on when they grow.
 Their necks elongate
 With increase of their weight
Till their feet touch the ground and they go.

When first a young donkey appears,
He hangs from the limb by his ears ;
 And he hangs till the day
 When he first tries to bray—
O, the tree shakes him off when it hears !
And he runs away wagging his ears.

The birdies swim 'round in the sea,
With the wasp and the bungleing bee.
 If you dangle a worm,
 With a wiggley squirm,
You might catch a chick-a-dee-dee.

The fishes swim 'round in the sky,
With pollywogs woggleing by,
 While frogs hop around
 On the clouds to the sound
Of the song of the lobsters that fly.

A wonderful Funnyland sight
Is a mountain of very great height;
But you never could guess
What happens unless
You should be there on Saturday night.

When the sun in the west is aglow
The whole mountain rumbles, and lo,
It pours out a stream
Of assorted ice-cream
By the banks where the macaroons grow.
Then from city and country and town,
The children, of king and of clown,
All run with their spoons
And they pick macaroons
And they eat till they have to lie down.

But the thing that the children adore,
Is a mountain that stands by the shore,
With a cratery pot
Where molasses keeps hot
With trickles of taffy galore.
Sometimes it rains pop-corn at night ;
And all of the kernels that light
On the mountain-top, pop,
And they hop, and they drop,
Till the top of the mountain is white ;
And corn balls roll down
To the edge of the town,
While the children dance 'round with delight.

There's a spring hidden deep in a glade,
Of most excellent pink lemonade.
 It falls in a pool
 All bubbly cool
From a babbling and brawling cascade ;
And the children, each summery day
When they're thirsty with rollicking play,
 Go there and dip up
 Lemonade in a cup
And drink till their buttons give 'way.

When Funnyland children have chills
And fever, or colicky ills,
 They are not put to bed
 To be poulticed and fed
On gruel and puckery pills.
When the Doctor comes in to advise,
He says, as he scowls and looks wise :
" You've been eating brown bread
 And potatoes instead
Of good wholesome candies and pies.
I can tell by the look in your eye
That you've kept your feet constantly dry.
 For a lassie or lad
 It is best to be bad,
Don't even be good on the sly."

THE Funnyland clerk of the weather
Doesn't waste his time finding out whether
Tomorrow'll be blowy
Or sunny or snowy ;—
O, he's wiser than that altogether.
He carefully studies the past
And runs up a flag on a mast,
So that people can see
If there's going to be
A thunder storm week before last.

THE hunters go forth to the lair
Of the Tiger with crimps in his hair.
And peppery snuff
Is the terrible stuff
That they shoot at the blundering Bear.
For lo, when they happen to spy
The bears that go wandering by,
They shoot off their gun
And, although the bears run,
They sneeze off their heads and they die.

But they never go hunting this way
For the Tiboons that live in the bay ;
 When they sneeze, O, the sound
 Cracks the air, and the ground
Wabbles 'round in a terrible way.
 So the King's Grenadiers,
 With wool in their ears,
Stand always in warlike array
 On the edge of the sand
 With a fan in each hand
To keep tickley dust from the bay ;
 So the Tiboons won't sneeze
 Shaking surf from the seas
And rattling the islands away.

THE King goes forth daily at noon,
 To parade with the knights of the moon ;
 And he's grandly arrayed
 In clothes that are made
From the skin of a raging Tiboon ;
A roaring and ramping Tiboon.

There was only one man in the isles
Who was wily enough with his wiles
 To capture this beast,
 So that people could feast
And the King could keep up with the styles.
He stealthily crept to the bay
While the little Tiboons were at play,
 And their parents were drowsing
 Or quietly browsing.
(They can't rage the whole of the day !)

The man waded quietly near
To the biggest Tiboon, from the rear,
 And he tied a tin pail
 To the end of his tail ;
O, the Tiboon went crazy with fear ;
His raging was awful to hear.
 But he finally died
 Of a twisted inside,—
Thus ended his ramping career.

THE soldiers are never afraid
To march in a long cavalcade
To His Majesty's park
To shoot at a mark
Or take part in a deadly parade ;—
A boom-ta-rah-rahing parade.
When the band blows a blare
To crack open the air,
O, the soldiers are never afraid.
For years, through the King's oversight,
They had never been called out to fight ;
And they thirsted for gore,
(Other people's) and swore
That they languished to fight for the right.

One day the King happened to spy
A ship sailing by in the sky ;
And, I grieve to relate,
Made a face at the Mate,
And the Mate was insulted thereby ;
In fact " he had blood in his eye."

So he signalled the Chief Engineer
To check the ship's raging career,
And the anchor dropped down
And caught on the Town,
While the children all trembled with fear,—
A lovely, blood-curdling fear !
Then the best parachute was prepared,
And the Mate, while the people all stared,
Came zigzagging down
In the midst of the town ;
But^r the King didn't look a bit scared.
(Though I think that he would if he'd dared.)

The face of the furious Mate
Was covered with whiskers and hate ;
“ The people,” said he,
“ Who make faces at me
All meet with a horrible fate,—
A midnighty, church-yardy fate.”
“ Surrender your Funnyland isle !
Surrender your treasury pile !
Surrender to me ! ”
But the King said, said he,
“ Excuse me dear Sir, if I smile !
(O, his smile could be seen for a mile !)

When the speaking and smiling were done
The army came up at a run.

O, the Mate was alarmed,
For each soldier was armed
With a kind of sky-rocketty gun.
They drew up in battle array
All loaded and primed for the fray.

O, the racket was dire
At the order to fire,
And the Mate—why he fainted away.
(’Twas the one way of getting away.)
Then there came a most terrible crash,
Such as big things make, going to smash ;
For the ship struck the ground,
And the air all around
Was filled up with splinters and trash,
Dust, kindling-wood, oakum and hash.
(The Captain and crew were the hash.)

The Mate knew his chances were slim,
But he never suspected how grim
Was his oncoming fate.
He was destined to wait
On the King who’d made faces at him,—
Disrespectful, wry faces at him !

If you ever should sail in the air
As mate of a ship, O, beware !
If a King in full view
Should make faces at you,
Don't suffer your anger to flare ;—
Remember this tragic affair !

THE Funnyland chimneys are all
So large and exceedingly tall,
That Santa Claus shook
In his shoes when he took
A look at the distance to fall ;
Then he altered his plan
Like a wise little man
And didn't climb chimneys at all.
But in dooryards of every degree
He planted a curious tree ;
And now every year
When Christmas is near
The fruit is a wonder to see.
There are dollies and trolleys and rows
Of silky and satiny clothes ;
And candles and strings
Of tinsel, and rings
For the fingers and bells for the toes.

There are serpents and sugary hearts ;
Tin soldiers and cinnamon tarts ;
 While bicycles grow
 On the branches below
With wagons and wabby carts.
There are ducks that you squeeze and they squawk ;
And green polly-parrots that talk ;
 And filberts and figs,
 And cottony pigs
That you pull by a string and they walk.
On Christmas Eve children go out
To the Santa Claus tree with a shout,
 And put baskets below
 The things that they know
That they couldn't be happy without.

Then Santa Claus comes in the night
When there isn't a person in sight ;
 And he chuckles with glee
 As he climbs every tree
And shakes it with all of his might.
Things rustle and rattle and flop,
And loosen and tumble and drop,
 Till the children awake
 With the noise that they make
And the baskets are full to the top.

Just think of the wide-open eyes
Of children awaiting surprise !
 They tumble and twist
 And sit up and insist
That the sun has forgotten to rise.
Then all, when the windows grow gray,
Run out in their bedtime array,
 And the frolic begins ;—
 They would like to be twins
To double the joy of the day.

WHEN slanting moonbeams touch the hills,
And shadows fill the glen ;
When people all are fast asleep,
The little maids and men
From Fairyland come sliding down
The moonbeams in a row,
With tuneful laugh and merry jest
And faces all aglow ;
As children in the winter lands
Toboggan on the snow.
The moonlight gleams on gauzy wings
And glints from precious stones ;
And caps are crowned with little bells
With silvery tinkling tones,
Each Fairy wears a cob-web dress,
And through this filmy guise
The mischief shows in every move
And sparkles in their eyes.

And some with bags of happy dreams
Go softly stealing where
The island children lie asleep,
And while they're unaware
Untie the bags, and lo, the doors
Of wonderland stand wide !
I hope, my child, you've been sometimes
Where dream-bags were untied.

The crooked gnomes, with peaked hats
And faces ill to see,
Come swiftly riding night-mares too,
And with an elfish glee
They gallop over children who
Ate fruitcake after tea.
I hope, my child, you do not know
About the things they see.

One fairy stole a pepper-box
And flew above the bay,
And scattered clouds of pepper where
The sleeping Tiboons lay.
The Tiboons sneezed, the islands shook,
And chimneys tumbled down.
The people thought a foe had come
To cannonade the town.
The King got up and trembled so
He juggled off his crown.
My child, if Tiboons chance to live
In any neighboring bay,
You'd better lock the pepper up
Whenever you're away.

One night with fairy mandolins
They played such 'witching strains,
A kind of dancing madness ran
Through every hearer's veins ;

The players passed the Palace Gate ;
The King and Queen and all
The people of the household came
A-dancing through the hall.
They hadn't time to don their dress
Who heard the music's call.
They danced the streets, and all who heard
The music lilt along,
Came tripping lightly at the sound
To join the merry throng ;
Till all the people in the isle,
In sleeping clothes arrayed,
Were dancing in the moonlight night
In motley masquerade.
They danced and whirled beside the bay
Where Tiboons by the score,
Who'd heard the merry mandolins,
Were skipping on the shore.
One Tiboon gave his flipper to
His Majesty the King,
And there together on the sand
They "cut a pigeon-wing."
The Fairies laughed until they cried,
'Twas such a funny thing !

At dawn the Fairies flew away ;
The dancing stopped—ah me !
The weariness and burning shame
Were very sad to see.
A sort of Sunday quiet filled
The isle from shore to shore ;
But Fairyland resounded with
A most hilarious roar.
My child, when slanting moonbeams fall
Around your house, beware,
Lest Fairies with their mandolins
Should catch you unaware.

A MARSH LYRIC

With humble apologies to the Shade of Edward Lear.

HE went to hunt on the marsh, he did ;
A middle-aged man was he ;
In spite of all his friends could say,
On a foggy morn of a Winter's day
To the mushy marsh went he.
And everyone said who saw him go ;
" O, he'll surely stick in the slough below,
For the mud is deep and the tide is strong
And happen what may it's extremely wrong
For a man of forty three."

Slime and slough, slime and slough,
In the marsh where the wild ducks swim ;
Their heads are green and their bills are blue
But there wasn't a duck for him !

The water came into his boots, it did ;
The water and mud came in ;
But he called aloud, " My boots will do
To hold my feet and the water too,"
As he held his chattering chin.
And he found a fish and a soft-shell clam
And he said : " How extremely wise I am ;
Though the marsh is broad and the sloughs are long,
I shall never think I was rash or wrong
To come where the fog blows in."

Slime and slough, slime and slough,
In the marsh where the wild ducks swim ;
Their heads are green and their bills are blue
But there wasn't a duck for him !

He went to the shore of the bay, he did
To the shore where the tules grow ;
And he shot at a hawk and a brown marsh-owl,
And a rail and a teal and a feathery fowl
Whose name he didn't know.
He shot at a snipe and a wild goose gray,
And a spoonbill duck that didn't stay,
And a fat mud-hen and a butter-ball ;
And he shot three times at a heron tall,
And a pelican big and slow.

Slime and slough, slime and slough,
In the marsh where the wild ducks swim ;
Their heads are green and their bills are blue
But there wasn't a duck for him !

The birds all laughed out loud, they did ;
To see the hunter there ;
And they said : " It's just no end of fun
When a middle-aged man with a great big gun
Shoots ragged holes in the air."
And the wild gray goose kept laughing till
The tears in streams ran down his bill ;
For there's fun so funny, the ducks agree
That even the biggest goose can see ;
But the hunter was unaware.

Slime and slough, slime and slough,
In the marsh where the wild ducks swim ;
Their heads are green and their bills are blue
But there wasn't a duck for him !

Toward night the man came back, he did,
With movements sad and slow.
And they said : " He's been to the briny bay ;
And he wasn't drowned in the usual way ;
But he hasn't a bird to show."
They gave him toast and some tule tea,
And drank long life that they couldn't foresee ;
And everyone said : " Some other day
We too will hunt by the foggy bay
Where the slimy sloughs o'erflow."

Slime and slough, slime and slough,
In the marsh where the wild ducks swim ;
Their heads are green and their bills are blue
But there wasn't a duck for him !

THE BOY AND THE BASILISK

OF all the fearsome, ugly things
With arms or legs or fins or wings,
That haunt the earth or seas or skies,
The Basilisk with fiery eyes
For fearsomeness took every prize.
His home, within a barren glen,
Was shunned by beasts and birds and men.
It didn't matter ; what cared he
For senseless sociability.

Daily the Basilisk would take
A trip down to a boiling lake
Of brimstone which he drank until
He had to crawl with care or spill.
He thought hot brimstone just the thing
With small blue flames for garnishing.
He swallowed it without a wink ;
It served him both for food and drink.
Then stretched upon the blistering shore
He slept, and lo, a sulphurous snore
Resounded loud and long and slow
From Zululand to Borneo.
None knew who heard this fearsome roar
Of what the future held in store.

When in his most goodnatured mood,
He basked content and filled with food,
His mildest glance would kill a tree,
Or split a rock or boil the sea.
'Twere wisdom then to shun his path
If he were roused to righteous wrath.

The Imp who kept the boiling lake
Supplied with sulphur, by mistake
Sent all the stock another way ;
The surface settled every day ;
And then—the lake went wholly dry.
It was a fearful hungry cry
With which, in no placating mood,
The Basilisk set out for food.

With anxious haste he left the glen
And sought the homes of beasts and men ;
For, lacking brimstone, he could stand
'Most any food that came to hand.
In fact he could, as you can guess,
Stand anything but emptyness.
For forty feet to left and right
He blasted everything in sight.
He spied upon a distant steep
A peaceful flock of grazing sheep.
He hustled up, this monster grim,
For mutton was the meat for him !

As he approached with hungry gaze,
Each sheep burned up with sulphurous blaze ;
And coming to the place he found
Just piles of ashes on the ground.
Now when a monster seeking food
Finds ashes, the resulting mood
Is apt to be a thing to dread ;
In fact he turned a fiery red.
He would have turned white hot but he
Feared burning up spontaneously.
He could have raged and gnashed his jaws ;
He could have scratched with all his claws ;
He had a long and mighty tail,
He could have lashed it like a flail.
What was the use, no thing in sight
Was left whereon to vent his spite.
Why should he make a grand-stand play
With grand-stands all so far away ?
The Basilisk was not too dense
To temper rage with common sense.
He reasoned thus : “ Since I destroy
By gazing, things I’d fain enjoy,
The one conclusion that I find
Is—I must starve or go it blind.”
He shut his eyelids with a snap
And started out across the map.

He gobbled here a flock of sheep,
And there he found some cows asleep.
By working overtime he could
Obtain a modest livelihood.
Sometimes he made a meal of men,
He could get on with eight or ten.
A load of wheat, a bale of hay,
A bunch of bushes by the way,
All these sufficed to partly fill
The need of his digestive mill.

Sometimes when hunger would abate
From fullness, he would meditate ;
And burning curiosity
Would fill his bosom full, for he
Was fain to see the landscape where
He sought his humble daily fare.
But when he chanced to crack his eye
All things in sight would blaze and fry ;
And thus he failed of his desire
To see the country free from fire.
And also, when he tried to see,
No man in range had time to flee.
Perhaps 'twere better just to burn
And have one's ashes in an urn,
Than to be gobbled up and risk
One's self inside the Basilisk.

This Monster with his hungry wrath
Left death and ruin in his path ;
And as he went on pasturing,
He neared the palace of the King.
The King had heard how, far away,
The Basilisk made disarray
By skuffing up the landscape's face
And swallowing the populace.
If this continued, it was plain
He'd have no reason left to reign.
Though far above the common mob,
He didn't like to lose his job.
'Twas now a far more serious thing,
The populace might lose their King !
So he sent out a hurry call ;
The Council hustled to the hall,
And talked and talked and talked some more ;
And then—a Basiliskian roar
Reverberated near and far ;
It made the palace windows jar !
Then silence fell and everyone
Forgot to talk and wished to run.
('Tis hoped the reader won't mind this
Irrelevant parenthesis.
Each King or Queen or Potentate
Or man who runs a town or state,
Should have a Basilisk to stalk
Around the place for stopping talk.)

Responding to the King's command,
A man whose voice could drown a band,
Came up and stood before the throne.
The King passed out his megaphone
And said : " Go forth by every way
Unto my kingdom's bound and say,
'Hear ye, hear ye, the King declares
That he who kills this beast or scares
His hungry ugliness away
To lands where he'll be sure to stay,
Shall be a knight and have a key
That fits the royal treasury.' "

The man went forth straightway and tried
His voice upon the countryside.
The Basilisk, in great surprise,
Woke up and almost blinked his eyes ;
He wished so much to see who kept
This racket going while he slept.
At last before he noticed it,
His eyelids opened just a slit ;
A little blaze, a little whir—
The King had lost his messenger !
" Alas the day ! " bewailed the King,
" I see my finish in this thing.
The Council can convene no more
For fear the Basilisk may roar.

The soldiers are of no avail ;
You can't expect them not to quail
When thinking of the awful risk
In war against the Basilisk."

Just then, a half grown Boy alone
Came in and walked up to the throne,
And said : " Your Majesty, I heard
Your proclamation. I am stirred
To undertake to overwhelm
The beast that now despoils the realm."
The King considered for a while
And raised his hand to hide a smile.
But though His Royal Highness smiled,
'Most any plan however wild,
Seemed in this dire emergency
Worth trying ; therefore a decree
Went forth at once to authorize
This Boy's unusual enterprise.
" Farewell, my Boy," called out the King,
" And may you overcome the thing !"
" Prepare " said he, " a burial urn
To hold this youth on his return."

The Boy took neither bow nor spear,
Nor any other warlike gear.
A basket, broom and tin dustpan
Were carried by a serving man.

Two others carried on before
A mirror large as any door.
Thus they went forth along the way
Frequented by this beast of prey.
With mirror set and polished clear,
The party waited in the rear.
The Monster came ; they could not see,
But hearing made them wish to flee.
He blindly stumbled up before
The mirror ; then he heard a roar ;
He stopped ; his eyelids slowly raised ;
His eyes, uncovered, fairly blazed ;
He saw himself ; he winked—too late !
His mirrored glance had sealed his fate.
A great black smoke, a flame, a boom,
Some ashes swept up with a broom !
The fearsome Basilisk had died,
Against his will, by suicide.
His ashes occupied the urn
Prepared against the Boy's return.

And when the Boy grew up he chose
The Princess for his bride and rose
To occupy the throne in state
When Basilisks were out of date.

RETRIBUTION

CUPID tired of the twang
Of his bow-string said ;
“ I will try a boomerang
In the arrow's stead.”

Pliant to his cunning art
Far the weapon whirled ;
Touched a throbbing human heart ;
Changed its little world.

Boomerangs come back, and this
Hit the careless elf ;
Lo, into love's baleful bliss
Cupid fell himself.

WHY THE SEA IS SALT

AN OLD STORY.

Long ago the water was fresh that now is salt in the seven seas.

ONCE on a time upon a moor
There lived a man who grew so poor
That though he toiled with all his might
From early morn till late at night,
He found it harder every every day
To keep the hunger wolf away.

One Christmas eve in deep despair
He found the cupboards all were bare.
His wife and children hungry-eyed
Their dumb reproaches strove to hide ;
But all in vain, their deep distress
Caused him to groan in helplessness.
All hopelessly he turned about
To seek what fate might hand him out.

His old godmother years ago
Had helped him when his funds were low ;
But she had been for many a day
Godmothering so far away,
That thoughtlessly she'd failed to heed
This godson's present, direful need.
But now by chance with beaming smile
She met him e'er he'd gone a mile.

She said, "Come, shorten up your face ;
The world's a very pleasant place !"
Alas, her cheer could not avail ;
He told her all his woeful tale.
She brought out from her ample cloak
A side of bacon brown with smoke,
And said, "Take this and keep on straight
Until you reach an iron gate ;
It is the gate of hell—repress
Your tendency to nervousness,
The Devil never would admit
A man like you into the pit ;
But with the bacon you can go
Into the anteroom of woe.
Now everybody knows full well
That bacon's very scarce in hell ;
And any of the Devil's kind
Would sell his soul for bacon rind.*
Just look behind the entrance door ;
You'll see a mill upon the floor.
Don't come away from there until
You trade that bacon for the mill."

* The critics here will stop and tell
How devils haven't souls to sell.

And so it happened in detail ;
The man's persistence did prevail ;
He took the mill with him, while hell
Was filled with frying bacon smell.

The man's godmother made him stay
A minute on his homeward way,
That he might gain the needed skill
To operate the magic mill.
With hands above the mill outspread
She bade him listen well and said :—

“ Grind, mill grind
The thing that's in my mind ;
Grind, mill grind.”

Round went the mill, a “ coach and four ”
Stood ready with an open door.

“ Stay, mill stay,
No more I pray,
Stay, mill stay.”

So said the dame ; and lo, the mill
Stopped instantly and stood stock still.
(Imagine how 'twould be today
If she had let it grind away !)

The man turned round with thankful pride
To ask the dame to have a ride ;
But she had vanished ; with a thrill
He lifted up the precious mill,
Stepped in the coach and banged the door
As if he'd done it oft before.
(He took with grace, like you or me,
An unaccustomed luxury.)

He reached his home and bolted in ;
The mill ground with a merry din,
A table, chairs, and linen laid
By butler and a serving maid ;
A shining set of silver plate,
And food and drink enough to sate
A hungry family, and then—
The mill was asked to grind again.
'Twas Christmas eve and all with glee
Asked of the mill a Christmas tree.

Then for each happy, weary head
It ground a grateful downy bed ;
And then, ah me, such restful sleep !
For sweet and pleasant dreams too deep.

But one small daughter woke in fright,
(I'm sure her supper wasn't light.)

And while she lay there scared and still,
She said the rhyme to start the mill.
Now nightmares of most every kind
Just then filled up her little mind.
The mill began and from its spout
Assorted nightmares galloped out.
They kept on coming out until
The father woke and stopped the mill.
Alas, the nightmares still were there,
Neighing and stamping everywhere.
The man called on the mill to grind
A driver of the nightmare kind ;
And when one came he stopped the mill.
The driver drove the nightmares till
There wasn't one that you could find ;
And as he followed on behind
He cracked his whip with leathern thong
And drove them back where they belong.
So quiet was restored and then
They all went back to sleep again.

The next day saw a busy mill ;
It ground a mansion on a hill,
With all things else they could require
To make the land of heart's desire.

Then, since the man was wise, behold,
It ground the cellars full of gold.
And then the mill was put away
And never turned for many a day.

* * * * *

A Captain of a freighting ship,
Who sailed with salt, trip after trip,
Heard of the magic mill ; said he,
“ I’d never have to sail the sea
If I could get that mill, ah well,
I’ll ask the man if he will sell.”
“ I’d never sell the mill,” said he,
“ I’ll give it to you willingly.”
The Captain scarce could trust his ears ;
For he had had the gravest fears
That mills like this would come so high
That he could never hope to buy.
In haste he took the mill away ;
He feared that if he made delay
The man might chance to change his mind.
He’d learned the rhyme to make it grind,
But his mad haste would not permit
His learning how to make it quit.
He reached the ship and sailed away ;
And when they passed beyond the bay

He set the mill—the story's told—
Where hatches opened to the hold.
Then said the rhyme to make it grind
While only salt was in his mind.
The salt streamed forth, the Captain smiled ;
Not very long was he beguiled ;
The hold was filled up to the top ;
The Captain told the mill to stop.
It ground right on without a check ;
The salt was piling on the deck.
His sword in anger then he drew
And cut the fiendish thing in two.
Each half kept grinding more and more ;
The salt came faster than before.
It sank the ship and all were drowned ;
But still the mill keeps turning 'round
And grinding salt ; so that must be
The way the salt came in the sea.

OVERDONE

TIME was old and on his way
Slowly toiled ; it seemed the day
Ne'er would end ; it seemed the Sun
Crawled the course he used to run.

But Love came, and when I showed
How Time lagged, he took a goad,
With its sharpened point of steel
Touched old Time upon his heel.
The laggard urged the tardy Sun
And like a boy began to run.

Stay, old Time, I pray thee stay !
Why this haste ? Why make the day
All too short ? Why make the Sun
Fly the course he used to run ?

THE WEST WIND

THE King and Queen of the Esquimaux
Came forth from the royal palace to go
On a ringing sledge with a great dog team
'Neath the clear still stars and the fitful gleam
Of the northern lights, on a long night ride
To the Pole and back, for the Queen was a bride,
And this was their wedding tour, heigh-ho !
For the ride of the royal Esquimaux !

The King was proud and the Queen was fair,
Though you wouldn't have known it had you been
there ;

For they wore white fur from top to toe,
And you couldn't tell t'other from which although
The King felt taller, though 'twas hard to see,
While the Queen was taller—horizontally.
At any rate when ready to ride
The King couldn't reach round his royal bride.

The dogs were eager, they set them free ;
They flew over snow and the frozen sea ;
And the breath of the dogs and the King and Queen
Like little plumes in the cold so keen
Turned to frosty flakes that twinkled bright.
The rosy glow from the northern light
Grew pale and wan in the snapping cold ;
But the dogs raced on for the King was bold.

On the cold white earth, 'neath the cold, cold sky
From the frozen sea to the glaciers high,
There wasn't a living, breathing thing
Save the racing dogs and the Queen and King.

The cooling Queen, in esquimau,
Said, " Dear, how far are we to go ? "
The King's teeth chattered but he managed to say,
" I have vowed on this our wedding day
To show my bride how the world turns 'round,
And so, my dearest, we are bound
For the cold north pole—" I regret to say
That she broke in here in a certain way
That isn't confined, as some folks know,
To the land of ice and the Esquimaux.
" Of course " said she, " I'd love to go
To the ends of the earth with you, but O,
I would never dare to go in sight
Of the old north pole on such a night."
Now the King was young and the King was bold,
And also newly married, behold !
He cracked his whip ; with right good will
The dogs flew northward faster still.
But though this was his wedding day,
The King expected the Queen to say

A word or two of protest—no,
Not a word was heard from her although
Against her will she was hurried away ;
So he turned—imagine his deep dismay,
She was white and still and frozen, alack !
The King saw why she didn't talk back.
Now whatever the King was, he wasn't slow ;
He yelled the esquimau word for "whoa."
They stopped and turned and the cracking whip
Urged the dogs due south at a good round clip.
Said the King, " O, Zephyrus, come and blow,"
(He was talking still in esquimau)
" Blow north ; I know that you like best
To fan warm lands from the warm, far west,
But just for once do come and blow
And melt Jack Frost, my family foe ;
And thaw my Queen, it's surely plain
That a frozen Queen can't help me to reign !"

And Zephyrus heard and softly blew,
And Jack Frost heard the sound and knew
The time had come for him to flee ;
And he fled far north to the frozen sea.
The stars grew soft and the floating frost
Was turned to mist, and the Queen had lost

Her death-like pallor ; a pink flush rose
To her cheeks and—alas—to her little flat nose.
Her eyelids fluttered and opened and then
She began the unfinished discussion again.
She looked at the King and said, " I'm bound
That I never shall see how the world turns round."
And she didn't. The King from that day forth
When he took her to drive never dared to turn north.
Alas, when they came to their palace of ice,
They found it a puddle that didn't look nice ;
For well-meaning Zephyrus just didn't know
That enough is enough when they ask you to blow.
So the King and Queen spent more than a year
In a rented tent, while an engineer
And an architect, at a very high price,
Built a brand-new palace of brand-new ice.
And there they lived and, as you'll foresee,
Were just as happy as happy could be.

But Zephyrus, as his wife fortold,
Came home with a very serious cold ;
And though he improved, yet even today,
When he blows through a pine tree on his way,
He wheezes asthmatically all the way through.
Just listen some time and you'll find this true.

THE NORTH WIND

LONG years ago and far away,
One very sunny, summer day,
In tropic lands, one special spot
Was very, very, very hot.

A King lay in the sweltering shade,
While crowds of dusky slaves arrayed
In almost nothing, tried to keep
His Highness cool enough to sleep.

Though fans were waved to stir the air,
Though fountains tinkled everywhere,
Though every noisy sound was stilled,
Though sweet and cooling odors filled
The air, though lulled was every sense,
The King was far from somnolence.

“Descend,” said he, “O, drowsy god ;
Vouchsafe at least to let me nod.”
His prayer was vain, the god ’twas clear,
Was out or did not care to hear.

In desperation then the King
Called up a slave and bade him bring
Young Boreas, a big, fat fool,
And said, “Why don’t you make it cool?”

Now Boreas knew of just one way
To cool things off, for every day
With mighty power of cheek and lung
He blew his soup to save his tongue.
And so responding to the King
He 'gan to blow like anything.

The sunshine paled, an icy chill
Came over all, and plain and hill
Were frosted white ; in sound repose
The King slept ; what is more he froze.

Still Boreas blew and blew until
There was no sound except the shrill
Sound of his blowing ; all in sight
Was silenced by the frosty blight.

He stopped, lo, all the land was dead ;
In terror at his deed he fled,
Nor stopped for flood nor stick nor stone
Until he reached the arctic zone.
And there he dwells ; alas, we know
That he remembers how to blow.

HOW IT HAPPENED

A MIDST fair gardens long ago
Beneath a changing sky,
There stood a castle, while below
A stream flowed slowly by.

A goodly man of high degree
Lived with his lady there ;
And time and fate had brought them three
Fair sons with joy and care.

These boys played by the river's rim ;
Alas one autumn day
It chanced while none was watching him
The youngest son at play

Fell in a deep and muddy pool ;
The yells that did resound
Would make it clear to any fool
That someone might be drowned.

The father grabbed a handy hook
And ran his best ; before
He reached the pool, the colored cook
Had brought the boy to shore.

The father held him downside up,
And rolled him round and round ;
He yelled—joy filled the father's cup—
He couldn't yell if drowned.

A joyful spanking, then a bath,
Dry clothes ; when he came through,
Though deeply stirred to rosy wrath,
He seemed as good as new.

The father pondered long—then sent
A note to Zeus which said ;
“ In general the government
Has had an honest head.

But 'gainst one thing I now protest ;
The waters everywhere
In north and south and east and west
Are left completely bare.”

Great Zeus had been in politics
For years and years and years ;
His term approached its close, and kicks
Like this aroused his fears

That reelection now might fail.
He told Jack Frost to plan
Whatever measure might avail
To satisfy the man.

And so Jack Frost invented ice,
And spread it clear and thin
Upon the waters ; this device
Kept folks from falling in.

Alas, he did not dare to go
Far in the temperate zone ;
The warm South Wind, his bitter foe,
Might catch him there alone.

And now when Spring comes back in May,
With robins in her train,
Jack Frost, the coward, flees away
And waits for Winter's reign.

The ice without his constant care,
Grown thin and weak and brown,
Runs off and leaves the water bare,
And anyone may drown.

THE FIRST MIST

ONCE Hermes paused in arrowy flight
And while he hovered to alight,
Beheld a winsome mortal maid ;
With other maids she danced and played ;
They all were fair ; he thought this one
The fairest thing beneath the sun.

Then Hermes, like a golden gleam,
Darted and dropped beside a stream ;
He called up from the water clear
A naiad ; in her dripping ear
He whispered long and low, while she
Nodded and chuckled pleasantly.
She waved her hand ; he flew away ;
A mist formed 'round the maids at play.
Then flying Hermes did invade
The thickening mist and kissed the maid,
And flew reluctantly away
With sighs and smiles ; (for many a day
Olympian letters went astray.)

The other maidens midst the mist,
Where they stood silently unkissed,
Saw nothing though they heard a sound
Like rose leaves falling on the ground.
The mist grew thin that had concealed
The startled maid ; she stood revealed
With conscious blush and just below
A budding branch of mistletoe.

And so the whole world came to know
Of mist and maids and mistletoe.

